

DEPARTMENT OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
DIVISION OF WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS
ADMINISTRATOR'S MEMO SERIES

ACTION 03-30

ISSUE DATE: 12/01/2003
DISPOSAL DATE: 06/30/2004

RE: CHILDREN FIRST
PROGRAM

To: W-2 Agency Directors
Tribal Economic Support Agency Directors
Child Support Agency Directors
Regional Administrators

From: Bettie A. Rodgers /s/
Division Administrator

Introduction

The Children First program has proven to be a very effective enforcement tool for local child support agencies. One of the challenges of the Children First program is that there is not enough funding available to serve all areas of the state and all of the participants that might benefit from the program. The 2003-05 biennial budget maintained Children First funding at the current \$1.14 million level for each year of the biennium.

In November 2002, the Bureau of Child Support formed an advisory workgroup to look at issues regarding Children First program structure, development, and funding. The group included representatives from BCS, DWS regional offices, and local child support and W-2 agencies. The group made certain recommendations related to future funding and program selection criteria. The group also made recommendations regarding Children First training and evaluation criteria. We appreciate the time spent and input of the workgroup members.

This memo outlines the Division of Workforce Solutions plans to modify and expand the Children First program.

Children First in Calendar Year 2004

For calendar year 2004, the state will allocate Children First funding only to counties that currently have existing Children First programs. Allocations will be maintained at the current level. Should existing programs choose not to continue into the next calendar year, the other Children First agencies may receive a one-time reallocation of additional funds.

Children First funding for calendar year 2004 will be issued under a one-year contract/contract addendum regardless of the administering agency. Funding will be issued in mid-December after the W-2 contracts are signed and returned to DWD. In the case of a W-2 consortium, Children First funding will be issued along with the other "Related Programs" funding. However, only counties that currently have a Children First program and have submitted the required paperwork will be authorized to utilize the Children First funds.

All programs must meet the requirements specified in state law and program policies.

ACTION SUMMARY STATEMENT

Those counties/tribes with existing Children First programs that wish to continue to operate a program in 2004 must do the following. Please note that in the case of a W-2 consortium, each county that will continue to administer a Children First program must submit the following information:

- Review the existing program plan submitted for program years 2002-2003.
- Complete an update to the existing Children First Program Plan using the attached "Update to Children First Program Plan" and "Children First Program Assurances Signature Page" (Attachments 1 & 2). This will allow the county to continue to administer the program under the 2002-2003 Program Plan for one additional calendar year. **Note: All agencies that want to continue their program must submit an updated plan.**
- Submit the plan to the Bureau of Child Support no later than **December 15, 2003**. Plans can be sent to:

Attn: Jean Zawacki
Bureau of Child Support
PO Box 7935
Madison, WI 53707-7935

Fax to: 608-267-2824
Email to: jean.zawacki@dwd.state.wi.us

- As the timeline for completing 2004 contracts is short, failure to provide the required information by the due date may result in the reallocation of funds to other programs.

Children First in Calendar Year 2005

BCS will immediately review the program structure, policy, and procedures to consider changes to the existing Children First program. Beginning in 2005, the state will monitor compliance with statutes and state policies regarding the administration of the Children First program.

The recommendations of the Children First workgroup will be reviewed by BCS and Division management. Proposed changes to the Children First program will be distributed to workgroup members, existing Children First programs, and the Policy Advisory Committee (PAC).

By June 20, 2004, the Division of Workforce Solutions will notify counties/tribes of the 2005 Children First Program selection process and funding methodology for 2005 and beyond.

Recommendations for Existing Children First Agencies

Existing Children First agencies that want to enhance the likelihood that they will be selected to receive future Children First funding should examine their program practices to insure compliance with state statutes and policies. This includes requirements for enrollment and participation and reporting of expenses.

Children First agencies may also consider ways to offer Children First services on a regional basis, rather than on a local agency-only basis, to broaden the scope and customer base, i.e. serve more local child support agencies.

Finally, Children First agencies may want to consider instituting performance measures or gathering other performance statistics to demonstrate the program's effectiveness and efficiency. The Children First workgroup has proposed a set of performance measures that programs may use as a model. BCS management will expand these performance measures. Once complete, copies may be obtained from Jean Zawacki at BCS.

Children First Requirements and Statutes

For additional information regarding the Children First program please refer to the following:

- Children First Program Guide
- Administrator's Memo 01-14 and 02-05 Available on the Work Web at <http://workweb.dwd.state.wi.us/dws/adminmemos>
- Child Support Bulletin 03-11R Available at <http://workweb.dwd.state.wi.us/des/bcs/bulletin/03bulls.htm>
- Sec. 49.36 and 767.295, Wis. Stats.

Questions regarding the Children First Program may be directed to Jean Zawacki at 608-266-6822 or jean.zawacki@dwd.state.wi.us.

REGIONAL OFFICE CONTACT: BCS Regional Administrators

Attachments: "Update to Children First Program Plan" form
Children First Program Assurances Signature Page

Update to Children First Program Plan-CY 2004

1. County/counties or tribe served: _____

2. Administering agency:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Contact Person and contact information if different from above:

3. Agency providing Children First case management and employment and training services:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Contact Person and contact information if different from above:

4. Child support agency information if different from above:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Contact person: _____

5. Subcontractor/s:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Contact Person: _____

6. Please include copies of all contracts/subcontracts.

7. Please check one of the following and provide additional detail as indicated:

I certify that the Children First Program for calendar year 2004 will be administered under the structure and procedures outlined in the Children First Program Plan submitted previously to DWD for the period of 2002-2003.

I certify that the Children First Program for calendar year 2004 will be administered under the structure and procedures outlined in the Children First Program Plan submitted previously to DWD for the period of 2002-2003 with the following changes (Please provide a narrative or other documentation detailing changes to the Children First Program Plan previously submitted on behalf of your program.):

8. Please include an updated, signed "Assurances" page.

**Children First Program
Assurances Signature Page**

Children First Administration Assurances Signatures

We, the undersigned, are in accord with the Children First Plan for _____ County or Tribe. We acknowledge that Children First funding cannot be used to match federal Office of Child Support Enforcement funds since it is used by the state as Maintenance of Effort for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

Child Support Agency Signature	Title	Date
---------------------------------------	--------------	-------------

W-2/TANF Agency Signature	Title	Date
----------------------------------	--------------	-------------

Court Assurances Signature

The court of _____ County or Tribe will participate in the Children First program by ordering eligible noncustodial parents to enroll in the program under Wisconsin Statute 767.295 who meet all of the following eligibility criteria:

- Child support is ordered in a Children First participating county/tribe.
- The participant is subject to pay a current child support order.
- The participant lives in a county that administers a Children First program.
- The participant is working less than 32 hours per week in an unsubsidized job.
- The participant's average weekly gross income is less than 40 times the federal minimum hourly wage, or the court determines that participant is earning less than their capacity.
- The participant is not enrolled in an employment and training program required by the Department of Workforce Development for at least 32 hours per week.
- The participant is able to work full time.
- The participant is not the court-ordered custodial parent of the dependent child (ren).

Subject to the conditions stated above, the court of _____ County or Tribe has full discretion in the referral process.

Court Representative	Title	Date
-----------------------------	--------------	-------------

If your county has more than one Children First vendor, include an Assurance page for each agency.